CHAPTER 6

The Role of Religion in Repelling Evil: A Jungian Perspective

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Religion has long been practiced as a way to follow and become one with God's plan (good) and avoid the devil's hardships (bad). This has occurred in humans for centuries and has been somewhat successful. But is this actually what has happened, from a psychological perspective? We will look first at Jungian psychology to better understand the terms used and, from there, at religion to understand it from a Jungian perspective.

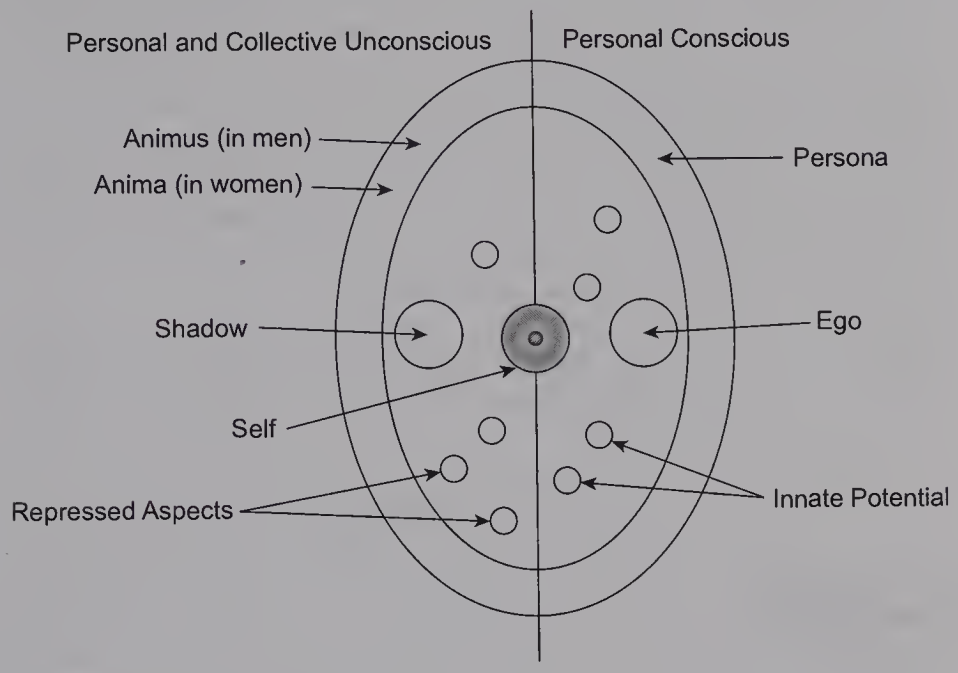
JUNGIAN PSYCHOLOGY

Perhaps the best way to gain an understanding of religion at a deeper level is through reference to Jungian psychology (Jung, 1964). Before I describe that discipline, let us digress to explore how Jungians view the psyche and its contents. There are a variety of terms used to describe the aspects of psyche, and it is necessary that we understand their meanings (Edinger, 1972). Figure 6.1 displays the psyche in Jungian terms.

The main components are as follows:

- *Ego*: This is the center of consciousness, which for most humans is that of which they are aware. It is the most prominent of the structures in the human psyche (Jung, 1951). The ego provides a unified sense of self in conscious life. Through it, we are aware of the flow of images, thoughts, feelings, desires, sensations, and impulses, and these we can observe, analyze, and judge. It learns from experiencing itself with the input from others. Most humans have been, are, and will be only aspects of their egos and nothing more. They are unconscious of the other aspects.
- *Persona*: The mask that we put on to appear appropriate to others is our persona (Jung, 1951). It is how we relate to others in preconditioned and

Figure 6.1 depicts the psyche in Jungian terms (Edinger, 1972; Jung, 1964; 1968; Singer, 1972).



acceptable ways governed by our culture. It includes our social roles, the way we want and need others to envision us, our way of being with others, and our way of envisioning ourselves. We have various roles that we play in life—a doctor, a businessperson, a spouse, a sibling, a pilot, a dock worker, or a carpenter. Currently, we find multiple masks or personas in a person, which form that person's various roles (Singer, 1972). For example, a person may employ their *parent persona* for dealing with their offspring, then switch to the *professional persona* that they display as well in their working environment. During the course of a day, they may also adopt their *caring role persona*, if someone they like needs reassurance, later switching to their *party persona* for dinner with friends. You can see that individuals have great abilities for forming boundaries to accent positive aspects they want to show and to hide the negative aspects.

We don an appropriate mask that tells us what aspects of ourselves to leave in or leave out, how to act, and what we should say and do. We may forget that we use the mask, or persona, as a tool and "glue" it to our ego, actually becoming that mask (Singer, 1972).

Personas have both positive and negative aspects. An overly dominant persona can smother certain individual aspects of oneself. The persona can also protect an individual ego, and even the psyche, from various social pressures and negative attitudes directed at a person.

- *Shadow*: This is the region in one's mind that serves as the focal point and storage container for material, for example that which has been repressed or suppressed (Jung, 1951). The material put into the shadow are tendencies, desires, memories, and experiences one wishes to forbid to consciousness. One could say such things are individual aspects of

a person that are incompatible with what the person tries actually to be with social standards as the guide. The shadow, then, contains the negative tendencies an individual wishes to deny, including sexual characteristics, animal instincts, and underdeveloped qualities. The shadow is quite harmless and can serve our purposes well when it is recognized and acknowledged, but it is very dangerous when suppressed and unrecognized (Jung, 1951). When it is not recognized, its contents can be unconsciously projected onto others. When carried too far, this can result in phenomena such the rise of a Hitler to power, resulting in the deaths of millions. The interaction of the persona and the shadow will be a main focus of this chapter as it proceeds.

- *Animus and anima*: These are unconscious structures that tend to complement a person with masculine or feminine characteristics. Jung (1951) termed these structures the *animus* for men and *anima* for women. They provide the basic framework for how men and women define themselves according to their masculine and feminine viewpoints. For example, the animus may project a strong, assertive, and aggressive male. A woman may view her role as passive, reactive, speaking only when spoken to, and a caregiver. These are learned roles from one's upbringing, in turn stemming from one's culture.
- *Self*: Many Jungians feel that Self is the most important archetype contained within the psyche and, therefore, term it the *central archetype* (Jung, 1951). It seeks to direct the persona, shadow, anima and animus, and ego in balanced and integrated ways. The Self can be expressed in dreams as having certain characteristics, such as a mandala, or a circular image. Great spiritual teachers—Buddha, Mohammed, and Jesus—are actually representations of the Self, the central Being who resides in each of us. The ego, through the early life, is thought to be the "All," but those who search in matters of life through the individuation process find that the images of the great spiritual teacher were actually of the central Being, or Self, who controls the psyche (Jacoby, 1969).
- Some other aspects:

  Unconscious: Jung (1951) emphasizes in his writing that the unconscious cannot be known because it is not conscious. Because of its very nature, it must be described in terms of relationships to the conscious self. There are two levels of the unconscious: (a) personal and (b) collective.

  Personal unconscious: This is represented mainly by the individual's past and is unique to every person and his or her experiences. The personal unconscious contains the memories of painful events that have been repressed, as well as memories that are unimportant and have slipped from conscious memory. The person's unconscious, in the way I use it here, corresponds to Freud's (1957) perspective of it.

  Collective unconscious: Jungians also conceived of a deeper than personal unconscious, which he termed the *collective unconscious* (Jung, 1951; Singer, 1972). Its content does not come from personal experiences but, instead, is common to all people. Jung postulated that the mind of an infant already possesses a structure that molds and channels all of its

future development and interaction with the environment. Just as the human body can be studied in terms of evolutionary progress, the mind can also be studied as such. The collective unconscious is the home of the archetypes (Jung, 1951).

Archetypes: These are formless, primordial, a priori structures of the psyche (Jung, 1951; von Franz, 1975). They are inherited systems that act as source points for the ultimate potential energy of the psyche. These objects can best be viewed in terms of the folktales and legends of many cultures and periods. Archetypes are the structure-forming elements of the collective unconscious. A wide variety of symbols can be associated with a given archetype (Jung, 1951). For example, they include a hero's quest, the night sea journey, and the battle for deliverance from the Mother. Archetypal figures include, for example, gods and goddesses, devils and witches, the Virgin Mary, and Jesus.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF GOOD AND BAD

Language, itself, selects, limits, and defines a perspective (Paulson, 2008). Consider how language shapes basic concepts of quantity, quality, and even relationships and spirituality in terms of duality. When discussing quantities, people generally think in terms of "one" or "many." When discussing quality, a person will generally respond in terms of "good" or "bad." When one considers the meaning of an event, one assumes "cause" and "effect." Finally, when one discusses spirituality, the concepts of "possible" versus "impossible" come to the fore. Notice the preanalytic constraints through which one filters world information, shaping a perspective prior to any reasoning process.

We look out into the world and see what we believe we have—either good or bad aspects. For example, if it has been a good year, we judge this upon factors such as how we like our job, whether we made a sufficient income, if someone dear to us survived near death, or if we were happy. A bad year would be defined from the opposite perspective.

Is a good time good for everyone? Right now, I say it is great; the snow has melted, and the day is bright and shiny. My next door neighbor is an ex-farmer who still thinks in farming terms. It is a bad day for farming, because the sun is shining and there is not enough moisture for his crops. Obviously, what we see depends upon our life's perspective.

As valuable as speech and concepts are for organizing the world, they are not reality but expressions of our viewpoint of reality. It must be kept in mind that our language and concepts for organizing the world both clarify and distort our understanding by constructing boundaries that actually do not exist and creating multiple distinctions out of what, in reality, is seamless (Midgley, 2000; von Bertalanffy, 1968). For example, if we discuss good experiences as consciously enjoyable, tacit boundaries in terms of good and evil are drawn to differentiate them. Given that our focus is on

good experiences, bad experiences can be marginalized, not by conscious intention but by unconscious omission. This is necessary in using language and our linear structure of thought.

This is well and good, but at a deeper level, what is the origin of good and bad? This question prompts exploration that is a little more vague. Let us go back to the beginning of our lives. When we were born, we had a proto-ego and not an ego per se (Washburn, 1995). We were, in simple terms, in a state of semiconsciousness. As we developed over time, so did our ego, until we became completely self-centered or egocentric. We modeled aspects of our siblings and parents in learning how to respond to someone appropriately. For example, we learned from our parents, more commonly our mothers, what was good and what was bad. As we developed from seeing the "outer" mother, we formed an "inner" mother within our being who modeled her. We essentially saw and felt our mother as either happy with us (good mother) or angry with us (bad mother). Ultimately, the things we did right went into our persona. This process originated from the archetype of the good mother, and our bad actions shamed us and were repressed into shadow via the archetype of the bad mother.

Although the collective unconscious also plays a strong role in this evolution of self, shaping our broader aspects or cultures, we do not know anything about it except through our dreams. In religion, we also used the same good-bad strategy, but in ultimate terms (Jung, 1964). Those things we value as good become heavenly, and those things that are bad become hellish.

REPELLING EVIL

Human defense mechanisms, like repression, suppression, and denial, and our normal thought processes allow humans to repress what they feel is against the norms, and to actively bring to consciousness that which is compatible with them (Cloninger & Svrakic, 2009). This process allows humans to coexist more comfortably. When repressed, certain aspects go into the shadow, and when accentuated, they are placed in the persona. The same selective process is performed in the realms of ultimate good and evil; that is, hell, as represented in the shadow, and the heavenly regions of one's being, as represented in the persona. It is not realized that they are essentially the same thing, but simply of different polarities. They are, instead, ultimately viewed as two separate dimensions in humans—the good and the bad.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN REPELLING EVIL

With this background, let us look at the role of religion in repelling evil. We have observed, to a degree, how the human mind segregates the good and

bad components, but how does it work with evil, and how does this connect with religion?

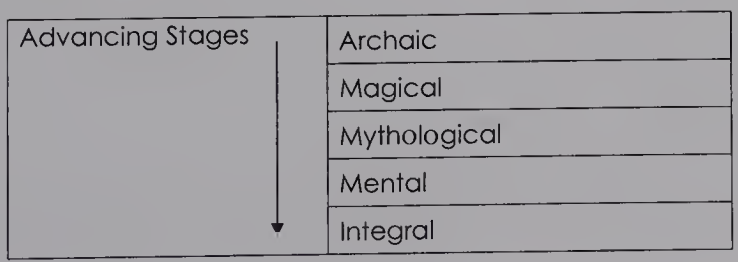
Looking back to the beginning of human evolution, we find five stages of development (Gebser, 1986). The design of these stages is represented in Figure 6.2. These five aspects exemplify human psychological growth through eons of time.

The archaic stage (Gebser, 1986) is descriptive of humans differentiating the conscious from the unconscious, which began among the most primitive forebears of our species, a proto-human. The individual consciousness was dormant. Individuals conducted life mostly instinctually instead of consciously. They were completely unaware of anything beyond their own existences.

As humans increased in brain development, they became keyed into the ecosystem, but there was not an "ecosystem" external to them. Instead, it was connected to them unconsciously, and they experienced it through their "feelings"—that is, magical events. Events, such as storms, that occurred on a large scale were, in their awareness, beyond their control. Humans believed such events were driven by magic, because the storms were not perceived as separate from themselves. There was not an *I* and an *it* perspective, only a vague *I*; the world was viewed as an extension of the self. Every attempt to control it is from within oneself and not from without. Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1926) termed this as *participation mystique*, participation of the subject (self) in the objective (outer) world in terms of *I*. The world appeared as they felt it, not as though they saw it. For example, if they knew that someone was angry with them, they felt or believed a god or goddess archetype was angry. They saw it in the way the world responded, not how they felt directly. In order to control their lives, it was the job of "witch doctors" to appease the gods or goddesses.

At the magical stage (Gebser, 1986), humankind were hunters, traveling from one area to another, searching for game (Feuerstein, 1987). As humans developed further, they became farmers, and then city builders. They changed their causative focus from "magicians" to the mythical stage, which was composed of gods or goddesses. They saw the world as *it*, and themselves as *I*. The two were separated now. They believed they could attain respect and glory by having on their side a god or goddess to control aspects of life

Figure 6.2 Evolutionary Stages



detached from them or out of their direct control. A new way of mastery was emerging—appeasing a god or goddess. Humankind's goal was to adopt for themselves a role subordinate to the gods or goddesses, who were now conceived to be superior. The gods or goddesses had the power, not humans. There are, of course, thousands of such god or goddess archetypal beings, but all took their power from humans in the collective or shared unconscious.

The next stage of evolution is that of human mental intelligence (Gebser, 1986). At this point, humans took control of the world, beginning to understand it. They realized that events occur as they do based on laws of science, not the whim of a god or goddess. Humans had taken control of what previously was believed beyond their control, and was now to become the center of being. I should state here that, no matter how developed one becomes, one still retains the beginnings of humanity stored in the collective unconscious. For example, I, as a scientist, may claim this is hogwash, yet when quiet and alone I may still experience the mythological aspects in my soul. This is especially true when I face a new, unpredictable situation in life, and I get initiated by the experience. Mythologically, I am "called," I go through an "initiation," and I must "return" from the adventure and integrate this experience into my past positions of life. I, as well as many other individuals, can even revert to magical thinking, as presented, for example, in the popular *Harry Potter* adventures. I go to the rest home to visit my mother, and many times I find her in the archaic stage of Alzheimer's disease. All of these stages remain very much alive in us, even if unrecognized and unused.

Finally, there is the integral or aperspectival stage (Gebser, 1986), where humans can see the world in terms of not only the "part" on which they focus but also the "whole," through a quadrant view that consists of four domains of cause and effect (Wilber, 2000). These are the personal subjective and objective domains, and the collective objective and subjective domains. Instead of ignoring three quadrants and living in only one, we can live in all domains in an integrated way.

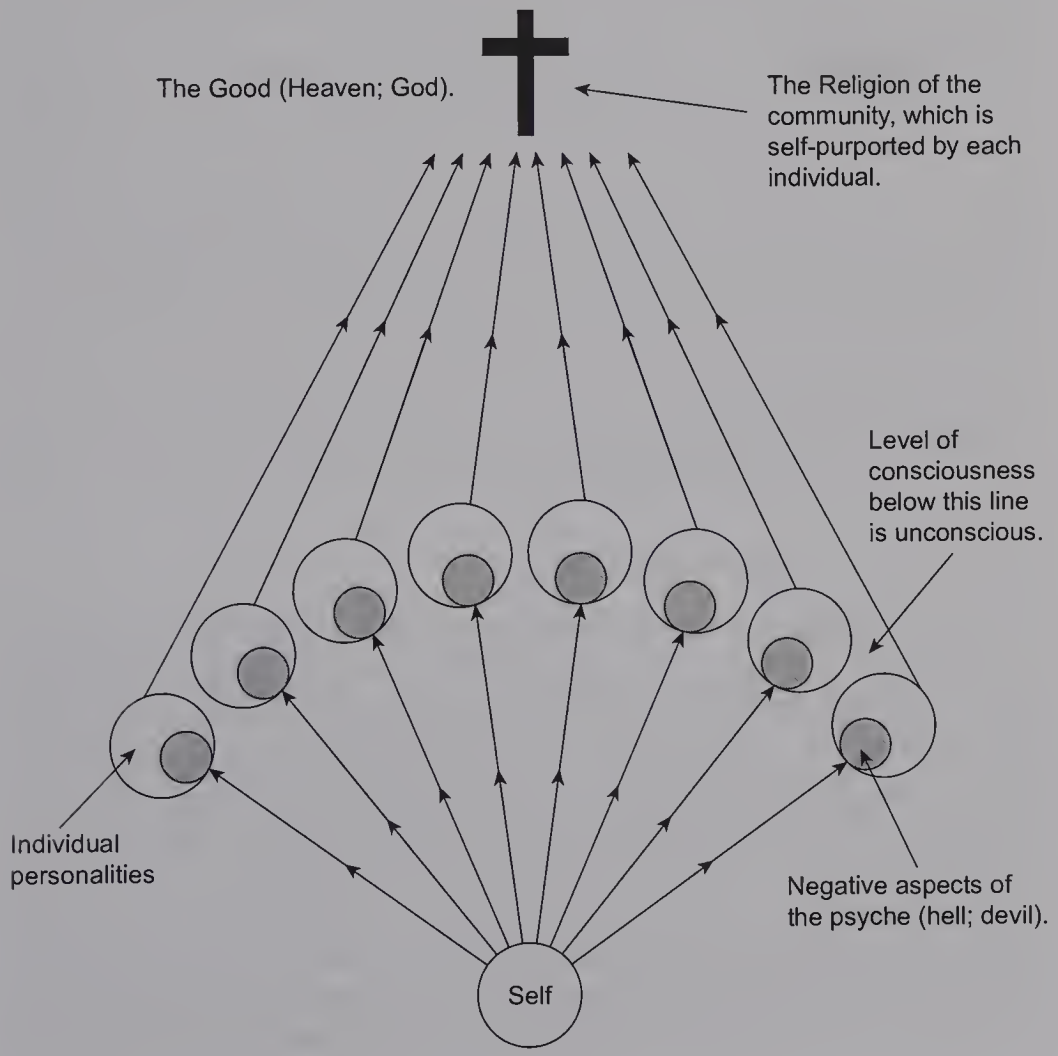
Religion and religious rituals have been used by humankind from the dawning of sentience. These are parts of the mythical and magical stages that have become formalized. The god and goddess were actually forms of the Self archetype that had deep human perception and perspective overlaying it. Humans protected themselves from psychic depths and its dangers by imaging the Self as external from themselves. That is, they projected the Self as God. Hence, a religion served as a container of the Self for a multitude of people. This protected them from the dangers of self-inflation and even alienation; that is, seeing themselves as God, seeing themselves as disconnected from God, or even simply seeing themselves. The collective unconscious (Assagioli, 1965; Jung, 1964), through the Self, brings to humans an image of itself, depicted as Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, or others, but even so, it is the Self (Washburn, 1995). Currently, much psychological counseling focuses

on helping humans to bring themselves directly into consciousness of the Self. However, this requires much personal and transpersonal psychological work (Mahoney, 2003).

Recall our previous discussion of splitting good and bad components into the persona and the shadow. We tend to create a power of good over us (God) and suppress the bad that takes us from good (Edinger, 1972) (see Figure 6.3).

We view the power of the Self as God, and what has been repressed as Satan. We continue to feel that these images are larger and more powerful than ourselves because, in reality, what they represent is larger and more powerful than we (Jung, 1968). In truth, this is the Self operating through the collective unconscious, which is much stronger than the ego. We know this at a deep level and have used a magical-mythological way of presenting ultimate good (God) and evil (Devil), thereby separating them from our ego.

Figure 6.3 Good vs. Bad


The Good (Heaven; God).
The Religion of the community, which is self-purported by each individual.
Level of consciousness below this line is unconscious.
Individual personalities
Negative aspects of the psyche (hell; devil).
Self

We do this specifically by mythologizing religion, collectively, as a container for the Self. Religion becomes, then, RELIGION, which is something vastly more powerful. It is our deepest way of living according to our own Self's way of viewing our life. Unfortunately, we suppress our Self and project our most sacred views onto religion.

All religious practices hold to the view that God is good and the devil is bad. We are to aspire to the good (God) and resist temptation from the bad (devil). Yet, the more one believes in God, the more one is tempted by the devil (Edinger, 1972). This is normal, due to the psychological makeup of humans.

Every society has such suprapersonal categories in the collective religious life, which, again, protect the individual from self-inflation and alienation. However, although the collective methods may protect humans from the dangers of psychic depth, they also deprive us of the individual experiences of these depths and the growth that such experiences promote (Jacoby, 1969). As long as a religion can contain the Self and mediate these events, there will be little need for the individual to have a personal encounter with the Self.

The problem has been growing since the 1950s, as humans have developed beyond the mythical to the mental, and has led to vast alienation. One no longer perceives his image of God in a magical-mythical role, personifying the highest power in the universe. In fact, God is dead for most humans (May, 1953), which has led to their undoing. Humankind is filled with existential fear and meaninglessness in life, as drugs, alcohol, and playthings take center stage (May, 1977).

> We are the hollow men . . .
> Headpiece filled with straw. Alas . . . !
> —Eliot (1925, p. 101)

THE WAY OF INDIVIDUATION

Today, humans have ignored God and the devil and become alienated from their selves. There is now only a self. The self–Self connection has been removed, the baby thrown out with the bathwater. Many humans are without purpose. What does life mean? You are born, you live a futile life, and then you die. There was a strong directedness to God that religions have provided, but humankind feels only alienation now. Humankind is lost in its estrangement.

What needs to be done now is for humans to take back the image of God (Self) and see it in their own psyches, where it has been for eons unconsciously. People must make it conscious now. Humans must come to realize that their egos exist within a larger sphere that includes the Self. Each of us

must see and recognize the self within the Self (Washburn, 1995). This will take much effort. One must leave the present for the future. But before one can leave the present for the future, one must suffer the "night sea journey," or the "betwixt and between" of one's life as it is now.

As this occurs, people will discover that two things happen simultaneously. They will become more authentic human beings out of the masses of inauthentic humanity. They will realize that they are good at certain things and not so good at others. They will see that good is not separate from bad but is a part of it. They will still perceive good and bad according to what the larger public believes in the cultural realm. But in their private realms, their "real lives," they will notice that good and bad will become integrated aspects of life, not separate distinctions of life.

The second thing that will occur is increased meaning in their lives. Meaning will exist inside them, not outside them in a church, synagogue, or temple. It will be inside them as the Self with which they can communicate. They will not pray to it but commune with it, for it will be a constant aspect of life. It knows things—deep things—for sure. The Self knows what their self's purpose is in life, it knows what they like and dislike, it knows disappointment, and it knows how to get on with life. It is essentially their true compass.

CONCLUSION

Integration is rare. However, it is not out of the range of human possibility, but so many people do not meet it because it requires will and persistence to master. Those who do make integration a top priority find that it becomes more than a way of repelling evil. It becomes a period when one is whole, not fragmented. One becomes integrated—mind–body, thought–feeling, logic–creativity, civilization–instinct, and ego–Self (Washburn, 1995).

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